



Legislative
Services Agency

MINUTES

Iowa Learning Technology Study Committee

September 30, 2004

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Jeff Angelo, Cochairperson
Senator Daryl Beall
Senator Robert E. Dvorsky
Senator John Putney
Senator Ron Wieck

Representative Carmine Boal, Cochairperson
Representative Swati Dandekar
Representative Ervin Dennis
Representative Rod Roberts

MEETING IN BRIEF

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- I. Procedural Business.
- II. Iowa School Districts -- Mount Ayr Community School District and Carroll Community School District.
- III. Apple Computer and the Maine Learning Technology Initiative.
- IV. Michigan Virtual University Teleconference.
- V. Microsoft Education Solutions Group.
- VI. Gateway and Watertown High School and Pocahontas Area School District.
- VII. Discussion and Closing Remarks.
- VIII. Materials Distributed.



Iowa Learning Technology Study Committee

I. Procedural Business.

Call to Order. The first of three meetings of the Iowa Learning Technology Study Committee was called to order by temporary Cochairpersons Senator Jeff Angelo and Representative Carmine Boal at 10:09 a.m., Thursday, September 30, 2004, in Room 116 of the State Capitol Building in Des Moines, Iowa.

Preliminary Business. Upon request by Temporary Cochairpersons Angelo and Boal, roll was called. Temporary Cochairpersons Angelo and Boal noted that proposed Committee rules were distributed to the members, and thanked Ms. Kathy Hanlon for organizing the meeting. They stated that they were there to listen and learn about how technology initiatives may improve student achievement and to consider how to plan for technology in Iowa schools. Representative Roberts moved to approve the proposed Committee rules, the motion was seconded by Senator Beall, and it was approved by voice vote without objection. Senator Wieck moved the election of temporary Cochairpersons Senator Angelo and Representative Boal as permanent Cochairpersons, Representative Dennis seconded the motion and it was approved by voice vote without objection.

Adjournment. The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:07 p.m., reconvened at 1:06 p.m., and adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Next Meeting Date. The Committee tentatively agreed to meet again on November 15 and 16, 2004. However, there was a consensus that the meeting dates might be changed in order to accommodate Dr. Gil Valdez, representing Learning Point Associates headquartered in Naperville, Illinois, who has agreed to travel to Des Moines to update the Committee regarding recent national trends in the use of educational technology.

II. Iowa School Districts — Mount Ayr Community School District and Carroll Community School District.

Overview. The Committee heard from representatives of several school districts about their experiences related to the planning and implementation of laptop programs at middle school and high school levels.

Mount Ayr. Cochairperson Angelo recognized Mr. William Decker, Mount Ayr Community School District Superintendent for a presentation. Mr. Decker's county-wide school district is predominately rural, which makes accessing high-speed Internet connections a challenge for families residing in his district. The purpose of Mount Ayr's initiative is to reduce the socioeconomic gap and raise achievement levels among students. Under the program, students and staff in grades seven and eight will be provided with laptops for use on and off school grounds. The district began preparing staff for the laptops in the summer and provided laptops to the staff in September. The program is already energizing the district's students and staff, though students won't receive their laptops for a few weeks. The district largely funded the program with local moneys that would otherwise have been used to upgrade two computer labs and with a small Star Schools grant. Students are responsible for an annual \$25 insurance payment. In conclusion, he



stated that the district will measure the success of the program using the assessment tools the district was already using, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

In response to questions from Committee members, Mr. Decker noted that approximately 25 percent of families in his district are familiar with the use of computers. However, he also noted that the largest issue is access to computers outside school, estimating that 75 percent of students do not otherwise have Internet access. He also stated that the community has been very receptive to the initiative. Mr. Decker discussed how the initiative has immediately improved students' attitudes about learning; but was continuing to observe its long-term impact. Mr. Decker also noted that the technology enables students to learn about all subjects taught in school.

Carroll. Cochairperson Angelo recognized Mr. Rob Cordes, Superintendent of the Carroll Community School District. Mr. Cordes began by observing that student achievement is lower at the seventh grade level than at any other grade level, classifying many of these students as "reluctant learners." His district's laptop program is intended to excite seventh grade students about education and reduce the district's achievement gap. Students have permanent custody of a laptop computer during the school year. Since the laptop program began during the 2003-2004 school year, students, and especially those requiring special education, have become actively engaged. Teachers have become active in facilitating student learning. In the past year there have been increases in the quality of writing and improved critical thinking skills. He cited examples of students keeping journals and communicating by e-mail. Mr. Cordes discussed instruction and achievement measurement tools such as the use of a graphic organizer which illustrates a student's or class's prior knowledge about a topic or section of text. Students who are not eligible for free or reduced price meals pay an annual \$15 insurance fee. Eighth graders who used the laptops last year, and who must now use a computer lab, were disappointed that the program is not in use at the eighth grade level.

In response to Committee questions, Mr. Cordes explained that computer programs facilitate learning in all academic disciplines including mathematics, and discussed how students used graphing and charting features as part of their math assignments. He emphasized that students still need to have fundamental writing skills. He also responded to a question by emphasizing that laptops are used whenever the technology would benefit student learning which depends upon how the teacher is structuring a lesson. Mr. Cordes anticipated that the district will eventually move toward online textbooks. He discussed dangers associated with student plagiarism. Mr. Cordes said he did not notice whether the program impacted library use.

III. Apple Computer and the Maine Learning Technology Initiative.

Cochairperson Angelo recognized Ms. Jodie Butler, Manager of Strategic Relations, Education Division, Apple Computer, Inc. (Apple). Ms. Butler briefly described legislative efforts to frame legislation necessary to provide technology initiatives in other states, and also



Iowa Learning Technology Study Committee

mentioned various statewide, county, and school district technology initiatives that are taking place in other states. She then introduced Mr. Chris Toy, Principal of the Freeport Middle School in Freeport, Maine. Mr. Toy described the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI). He agreed to postpone some of his remarks until the conclusion of a presentation of Dr. Bruce Montgomery, Vice President of the Michigan Virtual University (MVU), by teleconference.

During the period before and following the teleconference, Mr. Toy discussed the history and impact of the MLTI. The initiative was originally proposed by Governor Angus King. Governor King created a task force that worked for a year to study the idea, develop a framework, and issue a request for proposals. In the 2002-2003 school year, laptops were provided to seventh grade public school students and teachers throughout Maine. The initiative was expanded to include eighth grade students and teachers in the 2003-2004 school year. He also noted that Maine is working to expand the program into its high schools, though it is limited to those high schools that can contribute to support participation. Mr. Toy remarked that, within his 26 years of experience as an educational professional, the laptop initiative has made the greatest impact of any reform initiative in the classroom. He identified the initiative's clear, top-down vision as its most important feature. The research center at the University of Maine is under contract to evaluate the program. He noted that every major textbook now has a web component. Mr. Toy observed that the use of laptops levels the playing field, making access to educational opportunities equally accessible to all students. Teachers are creating their own textbooks or collections of web pages. Students are protective of the equipment and that disciplinary problems seem to be decreasing. Mr. Toy also commented that MLTI has leveraged other resources, such as free and open access to the Educational Planning Services Corporation's database.

In response to a question about initial steps to success, Mr. Toy emphasized the need to involve all interested stakeholders. He also discussed the need for planning. Mr. Toy noted that staff development dollars were received from vendors who wanted to make Maine's program a success. Following Dr. Montgomery's presentation, Mr. Toy discussed Maine's legislative plan, which originally included a \$50-million endowment, but which has been scaled down due to state budgetary concerns. Mr. Toy commented that the limited initiative has proven to be a success, and discussed improved writing skills.

IV. Michigan Virtual University Teleconference.

Cochairperson Angelo recognized Dr. Bruce Montgomery, Vice President of the Michigan Virtual University (MVU), who made a presentation to the Committee via teleconference. MVU is a private, not-for-profit Michigan corporation established in 1998 to deliver online education and training opportunities to the Michigan workforce. Dr. Montgomery explained that together with the University of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Education, MVU operates Freedom to Learn, an education program to improve student achievement in core academic subjects by providing Michigan's students with access to one-to-one wireless technology.



According to Dr. Montgomery, the program's two purposes are to increase student achievement and to expand technology opportunities to students, especially students in rural and high-priority schools. Michigan experienced a major budget deficit coinciding with the program's initial implementation, requiring administrators to prioritize implementation selectively rather than on a statewide basis. During the 2002-2003 school year, the program provided demonstration grants to 15 school districts (177 buildings) of differing sizes for use at grade levels determined by each district, from K-12. The program is moving toward establishment of the program at the middle school levels, starting with grade six. The program currently serves high-need, high-priority schools, but there is interest in expanding the program to more districts. The program uses Hewlett-Packard computers and Microsoft software. Dr. Montgomery observed that funding is a challenge. Michigan is funding the program using \$26 million of federal moneys available under Title II of NCLB and an appropriation of \$3.7 million in state funds is likely.

In response to questions, Dr. Montgomery advised members to study the problems inherent in picking a single solution provider when a number of schools will already have technology in place. He also suggested that each building assign someone to mentor teachers regarding professional development and opportunities for using technology in the classroom. He stressed the need for a bipartisan commitment to the process. He noted that the challenge is to sustain and expand the program and to balance the total cost and total benefits.

V. Microsoft Education Solutions Group.

Following lunch, Chairperson Angelo recognized Mr. Brice Oakley, a partner in Avenson and Oakley, and representatives of the Microsoft Education Solutions Group, including Mr. Paul Baird, Ms. Nancy Forestel, Ms. Shelley Furse, Mr. Raamel Mitchell, and Mr. Tyler Petersen. They provided a Powerpoint presentation which outlined a number of topics, including technology paradigms, connected learning communities and the current K-12 climate, Microsoft's K-12 focus, the components of a connected learning environment, portals which are customized for each school and student; student tracking and accountability possibilities; the Partners in Learning program, Microsoft's Innovative Teachers web site, peer coaching, principal leadership, and Microsoft's commitment to being a learning partner to educators and education in Iowa.

The representatives discussed technology issues with members of the Committee. Ms. Furse talked about the Partners in Learning program and its affect on literacy and peer learning. She stated that Microsoft has donated \$22 million in cash and software to Iowa education. Mr. Baird discussed how technology can provide teachers with flexibility, allow parents to become more involved in their children's school life, and increase student achievement.



VI. Gateway and Watertown High School and Pocahontas Area School District.

Cochairperson Angelo recognized representatives from Gateway, including Mr. Ralph Oxley, Mr. Todd Jolly, and Mr. Joel Breyfogle, who demonstrated a Tablet PC and discussed local school districts and Iowa postsecondary institutions that use Gateway products. Mr. Breyfogle introduced Mr. Brad Brandsrud, Assistant Principal at the Watertown High School in South Dakota.

Watertown. According to Mr. Breyfogle, Watertown is in the second year of its laptop program. He stated that community's response to the program is generally positive. Mr. Breyfogle stated that the school held three public forums and surveyed parents prior to initiating the program. He also explained that the school purchased filtering technology. He explained that the school has contracted for program evaluation services from Technology and Innovation in Education, a regional, nonprofit, intermediate education agency located in Rapid City, South Dakota. He also stated that other schools in the region that send their students to Watertown for advanced courses must agree to provide their students with laptops. He noted that the use of online staff development allowed teachers to learn at their own pace. He also stated that teachers in the school have become guides to self-discovery. Mr. Breyfogle stated that parents can review their children's records via the Internet, which has reduced the number of phone calls to the school, but increased the number of e-mails.

Pocahontas. Mr. George Tuttle, Mayor of Pocahontas and a technology consultant for the Pocahontas Area School District, was introduced and discussed his school district's technology program. According to Mr. Tuttle, the school district has a long history of working with and improving technology for students. He stated that district wired all of its buildings in the mid-1990s, provided Internet access to all staff, switched to personal computers, and moved to a Microsoft Windows platform to avoid the need to support two platforms.

Discussion. Mr. Breyfogle and Mr. Tuttle answered several questions from Committee members. It was noted that teachers should have the opportunity to become acquainted with laptops before students receive them. In response to a question, Mr. Breyfogle stated that the experience has helped foster dialogue between parents and the school. It was noted that parents can review their children's records, including report cards, on-line. Mr. Tuttle noted that the district has faced declining enrollment and reductions in staff. He stated that the district recently replaced every other piece of audiovisual equipment with Tablet PCs and projectors that work with the PCs. He stated that local funds paid for the \$200,000 program.

VII. Discussion and Closing Remarks.

The cochairpersons invited Committee discussion. Committee members suggested that the next meeting be used to review with the Department of Education and area education



agencies the current state of education technology and professional development, and available funding sources for education technology and related needs; and to hear from a computer technology coordinator from the East Greene Community School District. It was also agreed that the third meeting date will be reserved for the consideration of recommendations. Cochairpersons Angelo and Boal thanked members for attending the meeting.

VIII. Materials Distributed.

1. Background Information on Iowa Learning Technology, submitted by Ms. Kathy Hanlon.
2. "Laptops for Learning," submitted by Ms. Jodie Butler, Manager of Strategic Relations, Apple Computer, Inc.
3. "Learning in a Connected World: Harnessing the Potential for Technology," submitted by Mr. Brice Oakley.
4. Mr. Jon W. Hueser's e-mail to Senator Daryl Beall.
5. "Microsoft Total Regular Program District Cost Comparison — FY 2004 through FY 2006," Iowa Department of Education, submitted by Dr. Lee Tack.
6. Pocahontas Area Community School District handout submitted as part of the Gateway presentation.
7. Blueprint for School Transformation, January 1993.

Committee information may be accessed on the Internet at:

www.legis.state.ia.us/current/interim

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